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Ground maintenance tests were able to determine that external built-in test and system status lights on the FACE pods were incompatible with night-vision goggles because the type of light-emitting diode used represented a source of hostile lighting for other aircraft during nighttime operations. In the end, the FACE pod proved not only effective but also suitable for use during this quick reaction OUE. Based on testing performed by the operational suitability analysts and other logistics team members representing all the Air Force logistics disciplines, the 53ᵈ Wing Commander was able to recommend fielding this system for immediate use in the area of responsibility within 1 year of receiving the tasking to design and test a new capability. The lead operational suitability analyst on this project, Master Sergeant Steve Clay, became so knowledgeable on FACE pod operation and loading procedures, he was selected as the ACC subject-matter expert. He subsequently was tasked to supervise the load training of 926ᵗʰ Fighter Wing (Air Force Reserve Command) maintenance personnel in preparing for their upcoming deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the first operational use of the FACE pod.

Conclusion

While only a year old, this new group of operational suitability analysts already has made an impact on the 53ᵈ's tests and, most important, the warfighter. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement. The 28ᵗʰ conducts approximately 50 tests annually. With only five operational suitability analysts assigned, it is not feasible to have an operational suitability analyst assigned to every project. We will continue to add more suitability analysts and increase our capabilities. As systems become more expensive to operate and test, we are examining modeling and simulation tools. These new capabilities would allow us to utilize data gathered from limited test resources and extrapolate the information to simulate additional test articles with high confidence levels, thereby modeling actual anticipated results in the operational environment. Our goal is to find the problems before the warfighter does.

Captain Garrison is the Operational Suitability Division Deputy Chief, Master Sergeant Clay is the Weapon Suitability Branch Chief, and Technical Sergeant Kile is the Integrated Avionics Suitability Branch Chief. All are career aircraft maintainers assigned to the Operational Suitability Division of the 28ᵗʰ Test Squadron at Eglin AFB, Florida. JL★

Agile Combat Support: Linking Support and Logistics to Operations

Captain Robert C. Bearden, USAF

Proper Planning

If you have been around logistics for any length of time, you are probably familiar with the seven Ps of planning. Succinctly, the seven Ps state that proper planning prevents poor performance. (If you caught that only six Ps are listed here and you are not aware of the seventh, ask one of the old hats in your office or shop to explain it to you.) Regardless of how you say it or if you use a memory aid like the seven Ps to remember it, the importance of proper planning cannot be overstated. In fact, ever-increasing technological opportunities, an uncertain geopolitical environment, and the evolution of our truly expeditionary Air Force and airmen reveal this importance all the more. The capabilities that distinguish air and space power—speed, flexibility, and global perspective—are much needed in the current operational environment. These capabilities rely on the proper planning of combat support professionals because increases in responsiveness will come not only from flying farther and faster but also from those processes that ready the force and prepare the battlespace. To that end, we must resolve to improve responsiveness by providing logistics in a leaner and more focused manner and by ensuring all Air Force logisticians are trained and educated to do so. As combat support professionals, our focus is on being responsive to the creation of the desired operational imperatives (effects). It is critical that each of us is ready to plan and execute operations in today's demanding environment.

With that in mind, the intent herein is to examine the Agile Combat Support (ACS) operational concept of support so we Air Force logisticians better understand how our efforts support the needs of the combatant commander. As a starting point, it is important to understand a little more about ACS. There are six ACS master processes, and they each have roles in all operations throughout the spectrum of operations. Additionally, you see that the master processes employ a combination of functional competencies and capabilities to bring about desired effects. However, even with that graphic representation, you may still find yourself wondering, "Why are the master processes significant?" No other question in regard to creating responsiveness has greater significance.

The Master Processes: The Link

The master processes provide the framework for combat support professionals to examine our effects and capabilities and address questions like, Is the force ready, is the battlespace prepared, and is the force positioned? Consider for a moment the logistics lessons learned from Desert Shield and Desert Storm. While we were able to move a great amount of cargo to the theater to enable these operations, it is certainly questionable whether or not the force was positioned *effectively* or if the battlespace was prepared *properly*, because it took so long to move to the theater and longer still to sort equipment and get it to the right units. To illustrate further the importance of this type of question, consider the idea of forming and developing a prepositioning strategy.

The prepositioning of materiel in critical locations has become ever more important, mostly because we face an increased level of uncertainty. Our foe is uncertain; therefore, our environment, timing, duration, and scale and scope of operations are uncertain as well. The ability to respond in light of that uncertainty demands we create a more responsive force. To achieve that responsiveness, we must accept the fact that we simply cannot take everything with us. Couple this with a desire to achieve operational effects sooner and with the fact that our force today is so much lighter, leaner, and more lethal than it was throughout our Cold War heritage, and you have a rock-solid case for meticulously planned prepositioning. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to preposition everything we may desire to, and we certainly cannot preposition just for the sake of prepositioning. Instead, we must preposition materiel in a deliberate manner that ensures we answer the following questions: is the battlespace prepared in a manner that ensures our light and lean forces are mission-capable upon arrival, and can we maintain persistent operations for the duration of the fight until sustainment is established? Thus, the critical role of the master processes is revealed: they guide us in asking the right questions and ensuring we really have planned properly for an operation. With that understanding of the master processes and their importance, let us look at each of them briefly and further examine the art and science of planning and operating in today's environment.

Readying the Force

Truly, the heart of a ready force is one that is organized, trained, and equipped to bring about whatever effects our national command authorities may desire. That is simple to say, but in reality, the complex process of managing constant and dynamic change characterizes maintaining a ready force. Just as the geopolitical environment and technology are in a constant state of change, so too is our force. We see this change daily. On a given day, one weapon system receives a computer upgrade while another system is retired, or one airman graduates from a technical training course while another departs active service. This constant change requires us to make sure our force is truly ready, in peace and in war.

While each of the master processes plays a role in both peacetime and wartime, the process of readying the force, in particular, is most readily understood in its peacetime role. One could argue that this stems from the fact that we tend to be linear in our thinking. This linear thinking would cause us to understand readying the force as something that only took place in peacetime to prepare for wartime. But consider this, does readying the force continue throughout wartime as well? While it is beyond the scope of this article to deal with the specific definitions of *war,* it is certainly true that the Air Force is engaged in multiple operations that involve or support combat. Examples of these are Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Noble Eagle, to name a few. Knowing this, consider also that even while these operations persist the Chief of Staff of the Air Force has told us that we need to "reduce the size of our active force by 16,000 people, and we must reshape the force to correct existing skill imbalances and account for a new range of missions in the GWOT [Global War on Terrorism]."[1] So even as operations continue, the Air Force is committed to creating and maintaining

a ready force that meets the needs of the nation, even to the point of undertaking reductions. That should tell each combat support professional (and each airman) the force must be ready at all times and that it is critical to consider whether or not the force is ready, regardless of the state of operations. In peace and war, we must ensure the force is capable of providing the desired effects. At the same time, we must concern ourselves with the status of the battlespace.

Preparing the Battlespace

In asking whether or not the battlespace is prepared, the importance of planning is again revealed and begs another question: how do we *really* prepare the battlespace? Like so many things we do, preparing the battlespace is really a combination of several tasks and can be illustrated by a number of examples. Certainly, the building of time-phased force deployment data (TPFDD) is a critical element of battlespace preparation. When most of us in the profession of combat support think about a TPFDD, we picture an enormous spreadsheet with lines and lines of data. While that is an accurate view of the physical product of a TPFDD, in reality, it is much more. Beyond the lines of data and fields, like the ready-to-load date and required delivery date, is what is best described as a semiliving tool that aids us in positioning, tailoring, moving, and controlling US military forces worldwide. This tool enables us to do several things to prepare the battlespace: deconflict force movements, validate transportation requirements, and allocate means of transportation.

While the TPFDD is being created, we also must consider our strategy for sustaining forces as they take their places in the battlespace we have molded for them. Part of this strategy includes the prepositioning of materiel mentioned in an earlier example. Considering the few sites around the globe and the global nature of our service, it is obvious that prepositioning is key to preparing the battlespace. With the TPFDD created and a prepositioning strategy in place, we move into the processes that are best understood in the application of Air Force capabilities.

Positioning and Employing the Force

As we position the force, we begin to apply our strategies that were developed in Readying the Force and Preparing the Battlespace. It is at this point, one could say we cross the point of no return, and the true significance and outcome of our planning efforts begin to materialize. We begin to position the force by validating and executing the TPFDD. The validation process ensures the right equipment and people move in a correct and efficient manner, and of course, in the execution of the TPFDD, we see the actual movement of these forces. As our forces move quickly to the fight, it is imperative that we establish bases in a like manner. While many factors contribute to establishing and operating bases quickly, two are important to consider here: Force Modules and Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources (BEAR).

Force Modules are groupings of unit type codes and capabilities that provide a logical flow of forces to open an airbase, establish command and control, establish the airbase, generate the mission, and operate the airbase. In positioning a force, the Open the Airbase and Establish the Airbase modules provide the primary support structure made up of mostly mission

support group and medical group forces, as well as BEAR assets. These modules establish the foundation for operations while the Command and Control Module and Generate the Mission Module supply the mission generation forces and associated maintenance and munitions forces. If we have planned effectively, then this force module structure promotes agility because the base is opened and established with only those forces necessary. Further, this ensures operational elements fall in on an established support structure and can begin operations immediately.

To ensure this capability at established and austere locations alike, BEAR assets are included in the Open and Establish modules and, in fact, account for most of the cargo in these modules. Our BEAR assets enable us to establish new locations rapidly or augment existing locations in preparation for operations and are critical to our ability to position forces effectively at the locations of our choosing.

With a ready force, positioned in a prepared battlespace, we then can employ that force in a manner our leadership sees fit. Most important, having properly planned and prepared, we are able to generate mission forces, recover those forces, and regenerate them at will. The ability to repeat this process with accuracy and lethality is truly a hallmark of the Air Force. However, the process does not stop there.

Sustaining the Force

The employed force was able to get in place quickly and engage immediately because it moved to the operation in a light and lean manner. The lean nature of the force ensures responsiveness and flexibility, while planning ensures that the force can be sustained. Earlier, I mentioned the importance of asking whether we can maintain persistent operations for the duration of the fight until sustainment is established. The fact is we can, but only if sustainment is established at the outset on day one of an operation. If we are truly going to fight in a light and lean manner, then sustainment operations must start at the beginning, or we will find ourselves constantly trying to catch up with operational needs. In addition to starting on day one, sustainment continues throughout the operation, as well as throughout the ACS master processes. While it was not dealt with specifically in the section on Readying the Force, consider the role of sustainment there as well. In designing and equipping tomorrow's force, are we not also developing tomorrow's sustainment? Along with the imperative of beginning sustainment at day one and continuing it throughout the operation, let us also consider an operational sustainment example to clarify the role of Sustaining the Force.

You surely have noticed by now that the theme of lighter, leaner, and faster bubbles up throughout this article and has in many Air Force conversations over the last several years. As mentioned earlier, the desire to become lighter requires us to strive continually for a more efficient means of moving and sustaining our forces. One method of sustainment that has proven successful of late is the Centralized Intermediate Repair Facility (CIRF) concept. This concept allows certain reparable items to flow back to a single repair facility in theater and eliminates duplicated repair efforts at multiple bases. Additionally, because in some cases reparable items like engines and pods are at a single location, the CIRF can respond more effectively to the needs of the combatant commander. This is one example of

responsiveness that allows us to answer the imperative question: are we adequately sustaining the force?

Recovering the Force

The last of the master processes, like the others, cannot be overlooked. It would be nice to think we just could redeploy forces, either forward or to home station, and they would magically be restored to a particular level of capability. However, we all know that just is not the case. It is necessary to understand that our forces must be recovered to return them to some desired level of capability and prepare them for future operations. The other important aspect of Recovering the Force is that this process has a definite end point at which the force is recovered. From that point, increases or decreases in capability based on lessons learned can take place as the processes restart with Readying the Force.

While not a specific Air Force example, a good way to understand Recovering the Force and the distinction between it and Readying the Force is to consider a basketball team. Throughout the season, a team must recover to some level of capability after each game. This recovery typically does not include wholesale change; rather, it is characterized by returning to some level of readiness for the next game. As the season progresses, long-term plans for postseason play may take place and include large changes in capability as the team is readied for the long term. This playoff preparation represents Readying the Force whereas preparing for the next game represents Recovering the Force. With the process of Recovering the Force at a definite end point and the force back to some desired level of capability, the master processes begin with Readying the Force.

Prevents Poor Performance

Hopefully, this quick look at the ACS master processes has given you some insight into how ACS provides support to operational commanders, as well as an understanding of the processes themselves and the questions those processes allow us to ask. By asking the operationally imperative questions associated with each of the master processes, we benefit from an established framework of support that ensures proper planning on our part. Certainly, being able to think in terms of the processes with an understanding of the role of each in all kinds of operations allows combat support professionals and operational warfighters alike to better understand the expectations, importance, and needs associated with operational support. This perspective is a good first step for each of us in preventing poor performance on our part as individuals and as a professional community.

Notes

1.   CSAF Sight Picture, 29 Jan 04.

Captain Bearden is a logistics readiness officer currently serving as an intern on the Air Staff. He is assigned to the Planning, Doctrine, and Wargames Division, Directorate of Logistics Readiness, Air Force Installations and Logistics.

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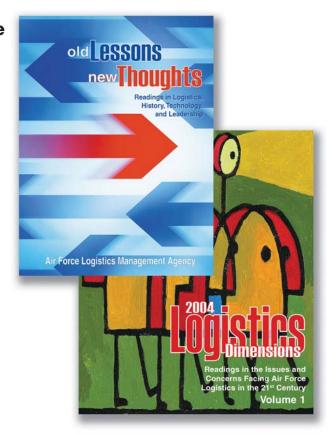- **Key Logistics Problems Analysis**

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